

coms 180 “sherlock time” final project guidelines

Objectives:

- To demonstrate mastery of course objectives (see syllabus)
- To communicate a sophisticated understanding of organizational communication concepts
- To develop practical applications from organizational communication research and be able to communicate them to lay/professional audiences

Basic directions: To demonstrate an understanding and synthesis of course concepts, you will propose and complete a fun and creative research project about an **organizational communication** topic of your choice. The idea is to combine original research (read: interviews/focus groups/observations/surveys/textual analysis) with knowledge from published organizational communication scholarship to provide important insights for organizations.

The project can be completed alone, in pairs or small groups (groups of 4 or fewer). Projects will be presented during the final exam period. Time will be allotted in class to check-in and strategize with groups. Interim assignments included.

Requirements:

- Projects must incorporate at least seven scholarly, peer-reviewed ORG COMM* RESEARCH sources (you may have many more sources, including professional or educational, of course)
- Projects must incorporate substantive original research data that you collect yourself (interviews, surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, or observations, textual analysis, etc.)
- Projects must include a scholarly rationale/discussion. In other words, whatever type of application you choose, it must be clearly grounded in org comm** research.
- Projects must include a practical application for organizations. In other words, something useful for organizational practice, such as a set of recommendations or a deliverable like training program/brochure/flyer/website/blog/infographic/video
- References (in-text and reference list) should be formatted in *correct* APA style. No need for APA formatting (running heads/abstracts) unless you're writing a traditional research paper.

Creative Freedom:

The requirements are left purposefully loose so you have creative freedom to develop what you consider a meaningful and interesting project. You may have noticed there's not a minimum page or word count. You're more than likely not going to get those in the workplace. Instead, you'll be given a basic structure for a project, and told to run with it and do your best. That's what you're being asked to do here... to develop a meaningful project based upon your interests, and make it useful for organizational practice. The size, shape, and structure are up to you. Do what you think is necessary to show your mastery of the course objectives (although do note that projects in the 3-7 page range rarely earn a passing grade as they are not long enough to meaningfully address the required source material).

I strongly recommend you think about how to leverage this project for future/current employment or educational goals. For instance, if you know you want to work in Human Resources, you might consider exploring a topic you know would be of interest to someone hiring

you into that field and emphasize the practical application/deliverable. Or if you're thinking about going on for a master's degree, you might want to emphasize the scholarly rationale/discussion and provide practical applications/recommendations rather than a more creative application.

Straight forward structure ideas:

If you're stumped in the creativity department and want some clear direction, consider these more straight forward ideas...

- A case study of an organizational situation or problem (say, for instance, how a university manages communication with various stakeholders during a worldwide crisis, and advice for improvement from org comm literature)
- A research paper about an org comm topic (say, for instance, best practices for telecommuting and managing work/life balance, or handling organizational change, or giving difficult feedback)

Audience:

Your audience for this project will vary and you should define it for yourself. It should not be me, your professor, but rather organizations broadly, a specific organization you're studying, organizational scholars, or employees. Because your audience is not me or the class, you'll want to provide context for the reader as well as a strong rationale to keep their attention. What's in it for the reader? Why should they pay attention to you and trust your ideas?

The REALLY important fine print:

* Your topic and research should advance our knowledge of some facet of organizational communication. Thus, you should focus your research on organizational communication scholarship. Start by looking at the journals *Management Communication Quarterly* and *Journal of Applied Communication Research*. You might find sources in other journals, but make sure they reference organizations and communication, otherwise they may not count toward the minimum. See the "How to Find Scholarly Sources Using Google Scholar" on Canvas for assistance.

** Again, you will *not* be successful with this assignment if you aren't grounding it in org comm research. An organizational communication research article will generally talk about organizational issues and communication in the title, and/or the abstract, and the article will be about some organizational topic. If you get an article from *Management Communication Quarterly*, it is 100% about organizational communication. Sometimes org comm scholars will publish in journals outside of Communication Studies, and then you'd want to look up their bios.

*** Do not be fooled by articles that *look* like org comm, but are really just organizational or management research. These will have organizational topics but not reference communication or any other communication research. We're looking for org comm, all the time.

Project Milestones

- **Final Project Topic & Sources—Due Wednesday, March 3, 20 points possible**

In a paragraph or two, please describe your final project topic idea and WHY it interests you. What do you know about the scholarly literature so far? What questions or problems are you thinking about to guide your research?

Mention whether you're thinking about working alone or in a partnership or small group. (If you know who you're working with already, tell me their names. Partners and groups only need to submit one proposal). Include what format you're considering (e.g., type of original research; type of deliverable or application). This idea is flexible... you can change it up until your proposal is due on Wednesday, March 17.

Also include citations for five peer-reviewed organizational communication research articles from COMMUNICATION journals that relate to your topic in correct APA format.

Note: If you know your group already, you can submit one document with your discussion of the final project idea and why it interests you collectively. All group members should embed their five peer-reviewed org comm sources into one document and have one person submit on behalf of the group.

- **Final Project Proposal—Due Monday, March 17, 30 points possible**

Craft a **detailed** final project proposal that includes:

- **A substantive scholarly rationale** for your topic/context. Use your scholarly sources to make a case for your project. What does the literature say about your topic already? What do we still need to know? How will your particular project address the need? (This is essentially a mini literature review)
- **A description of your proposed methods for original research** (interviews, surveys, questionnaires, textual analysis, etc.). Be specific... How many interviews? How many surveys? What questions will you ask? why? Who are your ideal participants? How will you find them?
- **A description of your proposed practical application/deliverables.** What will they look like? Who will make them? Why are they useful?
- **A detailed timeline of milestones you plan to achieve**
- **A references section in proper APA format**
- **A social loafing plan, if you're working in a group.** If you're working with others, include how you plan to divide up the project and your plan for dealing with social loafing.

Typically, this proposal will be 6-8 double spaced pages of text, not including references or any other materials like a title page (which is not required anyway)

- **Project Drafts Due—Monday, May 3, 30 points possible**

Post your POLISHED project draft on the Canvas discussion board for peer review and workshopping.

- **Project Drafts Peer Review—Wednesday, May 12, 25 points possible**
After reading Berkun’s (2009) “How to Give and Receive Criticism”
<http://scottberkun.com/essays/35-how-to-give-and-receive-criticism/> provide
SUBSTANTIVE feedback for at least five colleagues by Wednesday, May 12 at 11:59 p.m.
Comments should be designed to help your colleague meet the assignment requirements.
- **Final Project (200 points) & Presentation (20 points)—Wed, May 19 at 10:15 a.m.**
Upload your final project to Canvas. Prepare a 3-4 minute presentation sharing your main findings and tells us about your practical applications/deliverable.

If you visit the Writing Center or PARC and have your final paper reviewed (either for the Polished Draft Peer Review or the Final Draft), you will earn **15 points of extra credit so long as you have documentation of your visit and incorporate useful feedback. **To earn the extra credit, please submit your documentation and a brief note that explains how you used the feedback to revise your paper.** If you’re working in a group, all members should attend the meeting in order to get the extra credit.

****Note: As mentioned several times, taking advantage of this opportunity requires you to be ahead of the due dates and make appointments with the PARC or Writing Center well in advance so there are still slots available.****